

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 SS-15 SCA-01 CIAE-00 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7541
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2420

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, CS
SUBJECT: FIGUERES/ODUBER/VESCO - STILL FRONT-PAGE NEWS

REF: SAN JOSE 2304

1. SUMMARY. PLN ASSEMBLY FACTION LEADER CARRO NOTES POINTEDLY THAT US HAS NOT SOUGHT VESCO'S EXTRADITION AND REITERATES PLN CONTINGENT'S VIEW THAT VESCO SHOULD LEAVE COSTA RICA. GOCR AND PLN LEADERS CONTINUE TO DOWNPLAY SCANDAL. OPPOSITION LEADER'S LEGAL COMPLAINT THAT ODUBER AND VESCO WERE GUILTY OF ELECTION VIOLATIONS HAS BEEN DISMISSED. END SUMMARY.

2. ROBERT VESCO AND ALLEGED CORRUPTION RELATED TO HIM CONTINUE TO BE BIG NEWS IN COSTA RICA. EX-ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT AND LEADER OF PLN LEGISLATIVE FACTS, ALFONSO CARRO REITERATED MAY 26 IN "LA REPUBLICA" THAT VESCO SHOULD LEAVE COSTA RICA AND THAT AMONG POSSIBILITIES IS EXTRADITION TO U.S. HE ADDED THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE U.S. INTEREST
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IN EXTRADITION AND NOTED THAT THE VESCO LAW WAS CHANGED TO PERMIT A U.S. EXTRADITION REQUEST. OTHER PLN DEPUTIES SUGGESTED THAT THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO PASS ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION TO INSURE THAT VESCO LEAVES.

3. GOVERNMENT PARTY PLN AND THE GOCR CONTINUE TO DOWNPLAY THE SCANDAL, DEFEND PRESIDENT ODUBER AND FOCUS OPPROBRIUM ON

VESCO. CABINET STATEMENTS OF SOLIDARITY WITH PRESIDENT HAVE APPEARED, AND FOUR MINISTERS HAVE COME OUT IN FAVOR OF THE PLN LEGISLATIVE CONTINGENT'S CALL FOR VESCO'S EXPULSION (A NOTABLE EXCEPTION--FOREIGN MINISTER FACIO). HEADS OF MOST AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTIONS HAVE ALSO ISSUED STATEMENTS SUPPORTING THE PRESIDENT.

4. THE CABINET MAY 24 REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED THE FIGUERES' CHARGES AND DECIDED NOT TO DEAL WITH THEM FURTHER UNTIL THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND COURTS RESOLVE PENDING VESCO MATTERS. AT SAME TIME THE ASSEMBLY'S INVESTIGATION INTO THE VESCO/CORRUPTION ISSUE HAS BEEN ENMESHED IN LEGISLATIVE DELAYS. THE DEBATE, HOWEVER, PICKED UP ON MAY 25; THE OPPOSITION IS BEGINNING TO CITE VESCO'S ALLEGED UAFIA CONNECTIONS. MEANWHILE, THE OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO DISMISS PLN TACTICS AS SMOKE SCREENING AND VOWS TO CONTINUE TO FIGHT CORRUPTION AND GET VESCO OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

5. OTHER LEGAL AND QUASI LEGAL BODIES HAVE EMITTED DECISIONS AND DECLARATIONS IN THE SCANDAL AS WELL:

A) PUBLIC MINISTER LIC. FRANCISCO CHAVERRI ASKED JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES TO DISMISS RODRIGO CARAZO'S CHARGES OF ELECTION VIOLATIONS BY VESCO AND O'DUBER (REFTEL) MADE LAST WEEK. THE REASON FOR THE PUBLIC MINISTRY'S RULING--INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE PLN DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A CRIME. (ON MAY 25 THE COURTS AGREED WITH CHAVERRI'S RULING AND DISMISSED CARAZO'S COMPLAINT.) AT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SAME TIME, CHAVERRI ALSO ASKED THE COURTS TO RULE IF JOSE FIGUERES' DECLARATIONS CONSTITUTED SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO CHARGE THE FORMER PRESIDENT WITH VIOLATING THE ELECTORAL CODE.

B) COMPTROLLER GENERAL RAFAEL ANGEL CHINCHILLA DECLARED MAY 15 THAT HIS OFFICE HAS STUDIED JOSE FIGUERES' REVELATIONS ON CORRUPTION AND DOES NOT HAVE THE JURISDICTIONAL AUTHORITY TO INVESTIGATE THE CHARGES. HE ADDED THAT FIGUERES HAD FAILED TO EXPRESS CONCRETELY HIS ALLEGATIONS. CHINCHILLA NOTED THAT THERE WERE AREAS WORTH INVESTIGATING, AND SAID HE THEREFORE HAS REQUESTED THAT THE PUBLIC MINISTER TAKE UP THIS MATTER.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH INTEREST IN THE SCANDAL THAT IS NOW IN FOURTH WEEK REMAINS HIGH, THE LEVEL OF FRENZY HAS ATTENUATED CONSIDERABLY. IT APPEARS THAT THE SIDES ARE NOW ENTRENCHING THEMSELVES FOR A LONG BATTLE. THE

PRESIDENT AND HIS PARTY ARE LINING UP THEIR SUPPORT;
THE FOCUS, HOWEVER, REMAINS ON VESCO, AND THE NEED TO SEE
HIM GO. ON THE OPPOSITION SIDE, THE FOCUS IS ON
VESCO PLUS CORRUPTION.
VESCO, IN THE
MEANTIME, IS KEEPING THE LOWEST OF PROFILES.
FINALLY, JOSE FIGUERES HAS NOT SAID ANYTHING NEW ON THE
SUBJECT OF HIS PAST BOMBSHELL REVELATIONS FOR THE PAST
FEW DAYS. IT MAY JUST BE THAT FIGUERES WILL MAINTAIN
SILENCE UNTIL AFTER THE VISIT OF MRS. CARTER.
KILDAY

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